

5 reasons to look forward to PR in the year ahead

By [Dustin Chick](#)

20 Jan 2023

We need to have a deeper conversation in the PR industry, one that dives underneath the trends and that seeks to understand what's causing these themes to bubble to the surface.



Dustin Chick is the managing partner of Razor. He says there are five reasons to look forward to PR in the year ahead

While many of the trends observed are certainly valid, we should think beyond the obvious and bring a different perspective to how we run our own agencies and how we advise clients on their brands and reputations.

It goes beyond an appreciation of economic, social, and environmental undercurrents – and rather connecting the dots in a way that resonates with and influences the conversations we most want to have.

This enables us to not only look at the trends but rather, to unpack the realities shaping what is seen on the surface. A deeper dive empowers us to be truly effective members of good business communities.

The trends and what they really mean

Here are five themes for change, five ways to rethink the value we bring, and five reasons to look forward to PR in the year ahead:

1. This article was NOT written by ChatGPT

It seems if you didn't hop onto the artificial intelligence (AI) commentary bus during your December holidays that you were really not doing it right. While there is much talk about what AI is and how it influences strategic comms, the real conversation is not about the capability of the tools, but rather the human control over the ethics of how we use them in our work.

It doesn't matter that social calendars will be easier and more streamlined than ever before. It is in the nuance of the copy and images, and no machine can replace a person's ability to connect the dots. The bottom line is you cannot automate your reputation.

The imperative to build AI governance into contextually relevant and robust frameworks is a real undercurrent in this PR tide as there are clear boundaries to be agreed upon and adopted.



#BizTrends2023: Will AI make content writing a process of the past?

Justin Beswick 13 Jan 2023



2. There is (still) a war for talent – lots of people, but few that we need

I've lost count of how many conversations there were last year about how hard it is to find people without cannibalising your peer group. It's true, talent is a very real issue. But it's not the issue.

The bottom line (and I am probably going to irritate a few people by saying this) is that the talent coming into our industry is not appropriately prepared with the right skills. This sits not at the feet of universities, but rather in how agencies and clients are playing a long game with universities around influencing the academic syllabus with what is really needed.

Take for example a simple editorial calendar. This needs a broad economic and social filter to create compelling content that really earns its place in media (or in all conversations, not just media). This is not baked into how young professionals are being taught to think (let alone write).

Elevate above this is an appreciation of commercial acumen, it's not enough to know PR – what do you know about the Just Energy Transition and how strategic comms needs to contribute to this? How does the Just Energy Transition link to unemployment? How does unemployment impact the ever-increasing expectations on corporates to create jobs? What jobs?

In the end strategic communications must be unequivocally a measurable contributor in an organisation. The current curriculums and ways of thinking being taught must shift radically towards this mandate.

3. It's heads in the room not just a pair of hands

Ask anyone and they will tell you they "are good at strategy". It's normally just before they give you a menu of tactical ideas. The very clear missing middle is the trusted advisor. For strategic comms to retain its seat at the top table, this is where the emphasis must be significantly accelerated.

To move beyond the PR function as a transactional relationship - but to being a truly trusted partner requires that we secure the right level of intimacy with each client's business. Not just know what companies do, but how and why. In a post-Covid world this could not be more critical.

Communications benefited from the pandemic because of the urgent need to get to audiences with detail and clarity. But now, as the world slowly drifts back towards “how it used to be” communicators must keep their seat at the table. This is likely the most significant trend for the year ahead.

But, how? To start by looking around corners. Anticipating the business needs without accelerating faster than the business (or brand) can deliver.

Build connections with the decision makers around you and challenge their thinking with ideas and approaches that can measurably deliver for them. Often this means you shouldn't agree – the most powerful conversation being “no”.



#BizTrends2023: The year for stronger strategic intent

Claudia Smith 12 Jan 2023



4. It's not content, it's conversation dammit

We've all been in that meeting ... you know, the one where we review the editorial calendar. In 2023 we should be asking why we still have these meetings. Sure, it's important to have a planned view of what we will do – but an editorial calendar implies that we are talking at someone and not talking to them.

Editorial calendars don't positively influence people, but conversations do. Indeed, content is secondary. It's a tool, and not the end game – or as one of my partners says “otherwise we would be authors and novelists and not strategic communicators”.

The necessary trend here brings together our abilities to be advisors with a strategic appreciation of how the conversations we want to seed and create most powerfully influences the brand and organisations we are acting for. Only then do we talk about the type of content that would best enable this relationship. In 2023 there is a more urgent need to do this in real-time, the same way a traditional newsroom would.

5. Because we have perspective, we influence confidence

Comms people are pretty good at “yes we can and I'll make a plan”.

It's infectious and speaks deeply to our ability to bring confidence to issues. In 2023 we should own this, in a world where it always just seems hard, confidence is the most important impact we can make. This could be one of the most important and deeper conversations on our agenda as we craft simple and relevant solutions for an increasingly complex world.

ABOUT DUSTIN CHICK

Dustin is Managing Partner of Razor, the PR, reputation and culture and communications agency in the M&C Saatchi Group. Dustin is recognised as one of the top reputation managers and communicators in Europe, Africa and the Middle East - having being named by the Holmes Report / PROvoke Media as one of its top 25 innovators in public relations across Europe, the Middle East and Africa in 2019.

■ #BizTrends2023: 5 reasons to look forward to PR in the year ahead - 20 Jan 2023

■ "Breaking news" is breaking the news - 6 May 2020

■ Tapping into the potential of influence is how PR will matter most - 1 Jun 2016

■ [2012 trends] It's not about trends, it's about a reality check - 17 Jan 2012

■ ANCYL brand: organisation or person in crisis? - 11 Nov 2011

[View my profile and articles...](#)